

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents

From: Board Office

Subject: Accreditation Report for Baccalaureate Program in
Social Work, University of Northern Iowa

Date: March 6, 2000

Recommended Action:

Receive the report on accreditation for the baccalaureate program in Social Work at the University of Northern Iowa.

Executive Summary:

On February 17, 1998, the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work granted accreditation of the baccalaureate program in social work at the University of Northern Iowa for a term of eight years, extending to February, 2006.

While the Commission determined that all six accreditation standards had been met, it requested an interim report be made by August 15, 1998, to provide more specific answers to three questions related to Evaluative Standard 6, Curriculum -- Generalist Practice. The report was made and fully accepted by the Commission.

One method of measuring quality of academic programs is to have them accredited periodically by appropriate professional agencies. Such a practice is consistent with KRA 1.0.0.0, Quality, of the Board of Regent's strategic plan. More specifically, it relates to Objective 1.1.0.0, "to improve the quality of existing and newly created educational programs," and Strategy 1.1.2.0, "strengthen the quality of graduate and professional education at Regent institutions within the unique mission of each institution."

Background:

The Social Work Program at the University of Northern Iowa was first accredited in 1975. At the time of the preparation of the self-study report in 1997, the program had a full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty of 10. The number of undergraduate majors was 264 (193 declared, 71 prospective).

The Accrediting Council revisited and reaffirmed the program in 1978, 1983, and 1990. The mission of the program is to prepare graduates for beginning generalist social work practice. The goals of the program are to:

- (1) prepare students for beginning generalist practice;
- (2) provide students with a sound basis for graduate work;
- (3) contribute to the general liberal arts education of students who are not social work majors; and
- (4) afford students the opportunity to explore advanced methodologies and fields of practice within social work.

The six evaluative standards for accreditation on which the Social Work Program was judged were:

- (1) Program Rationale and Assessment
- (2) Organization, Governance and Resources
- (3) Non-discrimination
- (4) Faculty
- (5) Student Development
- (6) Curriculum

All standards were met in the 1998 review. Based on these standards, the visiting team made observations regarding program strengths and concluded that four areas needed attention. The Accrediting Council recognized that these observations were to enhance the curriculum and were not significant problems. The University, then, responded to specific issues outlined in the Council's letter to President Koob.

Program Strengths as Indicated by Site Visitors

1. Faculty are interested in and committed to students, the program, the profession, the University and the community.
2. Faculty as a group of scholars are regionally and nationally recognized for their writing, research, and service.

3. The program provides a rich curriculum that gives the students breadth and depth in their preparation for beginning generalist practice.
4. The Provost and Dean recognize the social work program at UNI as an integral part of the University as a whole, and are strongly committed to allocating the resources necessary to maintain a quality social work program.
5. The University is clearly non-discriminating, values diversity, and has a strong affirmative action program.
6. Students are knowledgeable and committed. They understand the curriculum and are willing to share their experiences in an honest and open manner.
7. Strong field instructors, many of whom are program graduates, have a sound understanding of the program, and desire ongoing involvement and input.

Areas for Attention As Indicated by Site Visitors

1. The curriculum, although coherent and based on sound educational principles, is not clearly articulated in places. For example, course syllabi and outlines did not reflect course content that was actually being taught.
2. While acceptable, the program's definition of generalist practice does not clearly spell out the curriculum policy statement that beginning generalist practitioners should be prepared to work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations.
3. The program has a satisfactory admission and advising program in place; however, there was some question as to how the process is monitored for consistency and quality assurance.
4. Overall, the department field program is well developed. However, field instructors report some inconsistency in the support contacts with the University liaisons.

Summary of the University of Northern Iowa's Responses

In the March 26, 1998, letter from the Council addressed to UNI President Robert D. Koob, the Department of Social Work was asked to provide an interim report which would address specific issues: Curriculum-Generalist Practice, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Field Practicum, and Avenues of Renewal. A summary of each issue and the department's response is given below.

Curriculum -- Generalist Practice

Evaluative Standard 6.0: The program's goals, objectives and curriculum must be consistent with the Curriculum Policy Statement for baccalaureate social work education. . . .

Response: The program faculty, in keeping with the stated policy of the Council on Social Work Education, developed its model of generalist practice. In response to the reaccreditation process, the faculty revised its generalist practice definition which guides the curriculum, goals, objectives and course content. The new definition is now directly quoted or integrated into the objectives and the course descriptions of basic courses. The content of the generalist practice courses has been changed, augmented, or made more apparent to ensure that systems of all sizes are addressed in keeping with the objectives and definition.

Human Behavior and the Social Environment

Curriculum Policy Statement B6.7: Programs of social work education must provide content about theories and knowledge of human bio-psycho-social development, including theories and knowledge about the range of social systems in which individuals live (families, groups, organizations, institutions, and communities). . . .

Response: The Commission found in its review of the program's self-study that the coverage of macro systems was not sufficient. The department revised the syllabus for "Human Behavior and the Social Environment" to address the issues raised. Required readings, the course text, and assignments were changed in response to the recommendation.

Field Practicum

Curriculum Policy Statement B6.15: Each educational program must establish standards for field practicum settings that define their social work services and practices, field instructor assignments and activities, and student learning expectations and responsibilities. . . . [The Commission asked that two issues be addressed: 1) better informing field supervisors about the integration and organization of the curriculum, and 2) providing consistent support to placement sites by program liaison faculty.]

Response: The next edition of the Field Instruction Manual will include the goals and objectives of the entire curriculum, a complete listing of

courses, and the flow chart diagram of the curriculum. Beginning in Fall 1998, the Field Coordinator will hold a Field Instructor's Orientation the second week of the term. Also, a questionnaire has been developed which provides the faculty with feedback on the frequency and sufficiency of contact made by field liaisons.

Avenues of Renewal

Curriculum Policy Statement B7.1: Programs of social work education must remain vital and progressive by actively pursuing ongoing exchanges with the practice community and other essential groups, and by developing and assessing new knowledge and technology.

Curriculum Policy Statement B7.2: Programs must establish and maintain relationships with groups that develop, implement, and benefit from social policies and services.

Response: The faculty has been active in the community, and in contributing to the professional literature in the field, as noted on pages 75 and 76 of the Self-study. Moreover, the Department of Social Work Advisory Board has been in place for over 20 years and continues to provide important and ongoing relationships with the practice community. Also, individual and groups of faculty have established and maintained an impressive array of links with groups. A variety of examples follow of faculty involvement at the local, state, and national levels.

Analysis:

The Commission on Accreditation found many strengths about this baccalaureate program, as noted above. It emphasized the faculty's positive evaluations from students as teachers, their involvement with field experiences, and their contributions to the profession. The facilities and library resources were judged to be very good.

A demographic profile of UNI Social Work majors was provided in Volume I, p. 50b, of the self study. Information on student outcomes assessment is found in Volume I, pages 14-23. Annual Student Outcomes Assessment reports for 1991-1996 are in Volume III, Appendix 1, page 93.

The self-study provided the results of the most recent survey of graduates to ascertain where they were employed (Volume I, page 19). It was administered in 1995-96, with a 46 percent return rate. The results were:

Employment of Graduates

Number of respondents = 107

48%	Social work
37%	Human services (related to social work)
8%	Employed, but not related to social work
7%	Graduate schooling, work at home, or unemployed

A copy of the institutional self-study, the on-site visit report, relevant correspondence, and the letter granting reaccreditation are on file in the Board Office.

Charles R. Kniker

Approved: _____
Frank J. Stork